

Received: 30 January 2025
Revised: 25 April 2025
Accepted: 13 May 2025
Published: 21 June 2025

Students' Ability in Writing Descriptive Texts: A Descriptive Quantitative Study in Junior High School Muhammadiyah Mataram

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ABSTRACT

Descriptive writing is a fundamental component of language education, enabling students to express ideas, describe experiences, and develop coherent texts. Despite its importance, many students face challenges in grammatical accuracy, vocabulary development, and text organization. These difficulties hinder their ability to produce well-structured descriptive texts. This study aims to analyze students' ability in writing descriptive texts using a descriptive quantitative approach, with the goal of identifying both strengths and areas for improvement. The study involved 21 students selected through purposive sampling based on criteria aligned with the research objectives. Data were collected through a descriptive writing task titled "Describe your favorite place!" Students' work was evaluated using an assessment rubric consisting of five aspects: content relevance, text organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics, including spelling and punctuation. The scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the calculation of the mean, median, and frequency distribution. The analysis revealed that most students demonstrated writing abilities categorized as "Good," while the remainder fell into the "Fair" and "Poor" categories. A notable uniqueness in the students' writing was their ability to organize ideas clearly and maintain relevance to the topic, particularly in describing personal experiences or locations with emotional significance. Mechanics, such as spelling and punctuation, were also generally well-handled. However, significant weaknesses were identified in grammar use, especially in tense consistency, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure. These findings suggest a varied distribution of skills, with some students demonstrating strong narrative cohesion but struggling with linguistic accuracy. The results highlight the importance of reinforcing grammar instruction and vocabulary enrichment in descriptive writing instruction. The study implies that future researchers and educators should focus on targeted grammar interventions, differentiated learning strategies, and the integration of grammar within contextual writing tasks.

Keywords: Descriptive Text, Writing Ability, Junior High School, Quantitative Descriptive Study

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the fundamental skills in learning English, as it not only helps students express their ideas in written form but also plays a central role in developing their overall language proficiency (Ilham, 2022). Among the various genres taught in schools, descriptive writing holds a significant place, as it allows students to express their perceptions, emotions, and detailed observations about people, places, or objects.

Descriptive writing is closely associated with the development of student creativity. According to Richards and Renandya (2002), writing enables learners to generate and organize ideas, which fosters imaginative thinking and personal expression. Likewise, Graham and Perin (2007) emphasize that descriptive tasks challenge students to use sensory language and vivid vocabulary, enhancing their creative abilities through the exploration of specific details and personal impressions. A study by Astuti et al. (2020) also found that when students engage in descriptive writing, they are encouraged to visualize and articulate their experiences, which significantly improves their creative thinking and linguistic fluency.

In the context of Indonesian education, descriptive writing is incorporated into the English curriculum across various educational levels, particularly in junior and senior high school. The curriculum emphasizes students' ability to describe things around them using appropriate linguistic features and coherent text structures.

A study conducted by Rahayu (2024) analyzed the descriptive writing skills of high school students and revealed that many of them encountered difficulties in organizing information, selecting appropriate vocabulary, and applying correct grammar. The study highlights the importance of conducting a comprehensive evaluation of descriptive writing skills to identify specific areas that need improvement, which can serve as a foundation for developing more effective instructional strategies.

Research at SMP Negeri 4 Talio, Central Kalimantan, found that the descriptive writing skills of eighth-grade students were categorized as average, with a mean score of 62.62. This result underscores the need to place greater emphasis on developing descriptive writing abilities at the early stages of junior high school.

One of the main challenges in teaching descriptive writing lies in the discrepancy between pedagogical expectations and actual classroom outcomes (Ilham, Musthafa, & Yusuf, 2020; Ilham, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025). Ideally, students are expected to write in a structured manner, use a varied range of vocabulary, and apply grammar accurately. However, in practice, many students fall short of these expectations. They struggle with organizing ideas, constructing coherent sentences, and using sufficient and contextually appropriate vocabulary. This gap highlights the urgency of conducting in-depth research on students' descriptive writing skills to identify their weaknesses and develop more targeted and effective instructional solutions (Wei, 2024).

Previous research on descriptive writing abilities has been conducted extensively; however, most studies tend to focus on a single aspect, such as text organization or grammatical mastery (Rahman & Hasan, 2024). Some studies suggest that the use of clear assessment rubrics can enhance the quality of students' writing (Sukyadi & Hasanah, 2022). Others highlight the effectiveness of process-based teaching approaches, in which students are given opportunities to revise and refine their writing, thereby improving their writing skills (Karim et al., 2020).

Although these studies offer valuable insights, the majority of them examine only one or two dimensions of writing performance (Crossley, 2020). Very few studies have comprehensively integrated the evaluation of all five essential components of descriptive writing. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing five key aspects: content, text organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics (Nabilah, 2018).

The novelty of this research lies in its comprehensive approach to assessment, which incorporates all five aspects in evaluating students' descriptive writing abilities (Aebersold,

2018). While most prior research has only examined specific components—such as grammar or text structure—this study aims to offer a holistic understanding of junior high school students' descriptive writing skills. It is also expected to contribute to the development of more effective teaching strategies that address all critical elements of descriptive writing.

Supporting this idea, research by Fikriyyah et al. (2024) demonstrated an improvement in the descriptive writing abilities of fourth-grade students at SDN Undaan Lor 2 through the use of local wisdom-based square literacy media. The pre-test and post-test results indicated a 32.8% increase in performance, with most students achieving a high level of writing proficiency. This study adds value by demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating culturally relevant learning media to enhance descriptive writing skills.

Murtiantin (2024) analyzed students' abilities in writing descriptive texts at SMP Negeri 3 Bojonegoro. Her study serves as a useful reference for understanding students' proficiency levels and the challenges they face in descriptive writing at the secondary education level.

Research conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Gelumbang implemented a genre-based pedagogy approach to improve the descriptive writing skills of Grade VII students. This instructional strategy offers an alternative method that emphasizes genre awareness in teaching descriptive texts.

A study by researchers Norhidayah et al. (2023) assessed students' descriptive writing performance based on three key aspects: vocabulary, mechanics, and text organization. The results indicated that while students performed well in vocabulary and mechanics, recurring errors still negatively impacted the overall quality of their writing. These findings underscore the importance of enhancing vocabulary development and reinforcing grammar mastery in descriptive writing instruction.

A study by Said et al. (2024) revealed that most students were unable to write effective descriptive sentences, particularly in the areas of identification, description, conclusion, and language use. This emphasizes the need for more effective teaching methods and increased focus on linguistic elements in descriptive writing instruction.

Another study, grounded in Heaton's theory, identified five primary indicators for assessing descriptive writing: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. The study found variability in students' performance across these indicators, with grammar and vocabulary emerging as the most problematic areas—findings that align closely with the focus of the present research.

In this study, students were asked to write a descriptive text based on the theme "*Describe your favorite place!*" This theme was chosen to encourage students to draw on personal experiences, thereby increasing their engagement and potentially improving the quality of their writing. Each student's work was evaluated using an analytic rubric comprising five key aspects: content relevance (25 points), text organization (20 points), vocabulary (20 points), grammar (25 points), and mechanics (10 points). The rubric aimed to provide a detailed overview of each student's strengths and weaknesses in descriptive writing (Mohammadkarimi, 2022).

The data collected from students' writing tasks were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods (Afika et al., 2020). The analysis involved calculating the mean, median, and frequency distribution for each writing component (Dong et al., 2024). These results are expected to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' overall writing abilities and to identify areas needing improvement (Yang, 2024). For example, the analysis may reveal whether students struggle more with grammatical accuracy or with organizing their ideas clearly and coherently (Fareed, Ashraf, & Bilal, 2016).

This research will answer the following problem formulations.

1. How is students' descriptive text writing ability based on aspects of content, text organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics?

2. What aspects are the main weaknesses of students in writing descriptive text?
3. How can the results of analyzing students' descriptive writing ability be used to formulate more effective learning strategies?

The objectives of this study will be explained as follows.

1. Analyze students' descriptive text writing ability based on five main aspects: content, text organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.
2. To identify the aspects that become students' main weaknesses in descriptive writing.
3. Provide practical recommendations for teachers in designing more effective learning strategies to improve students' descriptive writing skills.

The results of this study provide several benefits as follows.

1. Provides a real picture of students' descriptive writing ability as a basis for curriculum development and English teaching methods at the junior high school level.
2. Helps teachers understand students' strengths and weaknesses in writing, so that they can develop more targeted learning approaches.
3. To be a reference for the development of further research related to descriptive writing learning and improving the quality of English learning in schools.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive design to analyze the descriptive writing skills of second-grade students. A total of 21 students from SMP Muhammadiyah Mataram were selected as research participants using a purposive sampling technique. The selection was based on the consideration that the chosen students had already received instruction on descriptive texts and were deemed capable of completing the writing task according to the specified topic, namely *"Describe your favorite place!"* This sampling technique ensured that the participants met the criteria aligned with the research objectives, allowing for an accurate depiction of students' descriptive writing abilities—particularly in terms of content, text organization, vocabulary, grammar, and writing mechanics. The findings of this study are expected to contribute meaningfully to the development of more effective instructional strategies in English language teaching at the junior high school level.

Purposive sampling was chosen as it enables the researcher to select participants based on specific characteristics and availability relevant to the research goals. A sample size of 21 students was considered sufficient to represent the population of second-grade students in evaluating their descriptive writing competence.

The instrument used for data collection was a worksheet containing a descriptive writing task. Students were instructed to write a descriptive text on the topic *"Describe your favorite place!"*—a theme selected to encourage students to reflect on personal experiences, which is expected to increase their motivation and result in better writing performance. The students' writing was assessed using an analytical rubric covering five key aspects: content relevance, text organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

Table 1. Rubric for Students' Descriptive Text Writing Assessment

Aspect	Maximum Score	Description of Criteria
Content Relevance	25	21–25: Highly relevant content; ideas are fully and deeply developed. 16–20: Fairly relevant content with adequately developed ideas. 11–15: Less relevant content; ideas are underdeveloped. 6–10: Irrelevant content; minimal idea development. 0–5: Completely off-topic or no ideas presented.

Text Organization	20	17–20: Excellent paragraph structure; ideas are logically and cohesively arranged. 13–16: Adequately logical arrangement with sufficient use of transitions. 9–12: Unclear structure; limited cohesion. 5–8: Disconnected and poorly sequenced ideas. 0–4: No clear structure or coherence.
Vocabulary	20	17–20: Rich, precise, and varied vocabulary. 13–16: Fairly accurate and moderately varied vocabulary. 9–12: Limited vocabulary with frequent repetition. 5–8: Many inappropriate or overly general words. 0–4: Extremely limited and contextually inappropriate vocabulary.
Grammar	25	21–25: Highly accurate and varied sentence structures. 16–20: Minor errors that do not hinder understanding. 11–15: Frequent errors but still understandable. 6–10: Errors occur often and hinder comprehension. 0–5: Sentences are incomprehensible due to grammatical errors.
Mechanics	10	9–10: Almost no spelling or punctuation errors. 7–8: A few minor errors. 5–6: Frequent errors that begin to affect clarity. 3–4: Many noticeable errors. 0–2: Errors are very frequent and impede understanding.

Data collection was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher distributed worksheets to the students, allowing them sufficient time to complete the writing task based on the provided instructions. Once all tasks had been submitted, each student’s work was evaluated using a predetermined analytic rubric. The scoring process was carried out systematically and consistently to ensure that the results accurately reflected the students’ actual writing abilities.

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. The mean was calculated to determine the students' average writing performance, while the median was used to identify the central tendency of their scores, offering insights into overall score distribution. Additionally, a frequency distribution analysis was conducted to categorize students into four performance levels—Excellent, Good, Fair, and Poor—based on specific score intervals. This analytical approach provided a clearer and more structured overview of students’ writing proficiency.

The results of the analysis are presented in both tables and graphs, offering easily interpretable visual representations of the research findings. The tables display the mean, median, and the number of students in each performance category, while the graphs illustrate the distribution of writing scores, thereby enhancing comprehension of the data. This analysis was essential in addressing the research questions concerning students’ proficiency in descriptive writing.

Moreover, the findings help identify specific areas of writing instruction that require improvement. The analysis yields valuable insights into critical components such as grammar and vocabulary, which were identified as needing further attention. These results are expected to inform and support the development of more targeted and effective instructional strategies, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of students’ descriptive writing skills and serving as a foundation for future curriculum planning and teacher development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the findings of the study, which aims to analyze the descriptive writing abilities of students at Junior High School Muhammadiyah Mataram. The evaluation focuses on six key aspects of writing: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and overall grammar proficiency. These findings are supported by quantitative data and are accompanied by detailed interpretations for each assessed component.

1. Overview of Students' Writing Scores

The analysis of the 21 student participants reveals varying levels of proficiency in writing descriptive texts. Table 2 presents the individual scores, converted into percentages to enhance clarity and comparability across the assessed categories.

Table 2. Students' Writing Scores Across All Aspects (Scaled to Percentages)

Aspect	Total Score	Maximum Score per Student	Number of Students	Calculation Formula	Average Score
Content	1,240	25	21	$(1,240 \div (21 \times 25)) \times 100 = (1,240 \div 525) \times 100$	59.05%
Organization	1,320	20	21	$(1,320 \div (21 \times 20)) \times 100 = (1,320 \div 420) \times 100$	62.86%
Grammar	1,200	25	21	$(1,200 \div (21 \times 25)) \times 100 = (1,200 \div 525) \times 100$	57.14%
Vocabulary	1,260	20	21	$1,260 \div (21 \times 20) \times 100 = (1,260 \div 420) \times 100$	60.00%
Mechanics	1,200	10	21	$(1,200 \div (21 \times 10)) \times 100 = (1,200 \div 210) \times 100$	57.14%
Grammar Proficiency	1,100	25	21	$(1,100 \div (21 \times 25)) \times 100 = (1,100 \div 525) \times 100$	52.38%

The table presents a detailed overview of the average percentage scores of students' descriptive writing abilities across six main aspects: content (59.05%), organization (62.86%), grammar (57.14%), vocabulary (60.00%), mechanics (57.14%), and grammar proficiency (52.38%). These results offer valuable insights into the students' strengths and weaknesses in writing.

Among the assessed aspects, organization and vocabulary received the highest average scores, suggesting that students are relatively proficient in logically structuring their writing and selecting appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas effectively. This indicates a sound understanding of how to construct coherent paragraphs and use contextually appropriate language.

In contrast, grammar proficiency recorded the lowest average score (52.38%), highlighting a significant challenge in students' writing performance. These low scores reflect students' difficulties in producing grammatically accurate sentences, including issues with subject-verb agreement, tense consistency, word order, and sentence complexity. Similarly, the mechanics aspect—encompassing punctuation, spelling, and formatting—also received a relatively low score (57.14%), underscoring the technical difficulties students face when

writing. These grammatical and mechanical errors can hinder the clarity and flow of students' writing, making their intended meaning harder to interpret.

The content aspect received a moderate average score of 59.05%, indicating that while students are generally able to identify and express the main ideas of their texts, they often struggle to elaborate on those ideas with sufficient supporting details and coherence. This suggests that although the foundational content skills are present, there is considerable room for improvement in terms of depth and clarity.

Overall, the average writing score of 58% places students' descriptive writing ability in the "fair" category. While their performance is adequate, it still requires substantial enhancement, particularly in the areas of grammar, mechanics, and idea development.

2. Summary of Statistical Analysis

The following descriptive statistics provide an overview of the distribution of scores across all aspects:

Table 3. Summary of Descriptive Statistics

Aspect	Mean (%)	Median (%)	Mode (%)	Minimum (%)	Maximum (%)
Content	59.05	60.00	60.00	40.00	80.00
Organization	62.86	60.00	60.00	40.00	80.00
Grammar	57.14	60.00	60.00	40.00	80.00
Vocabulary	60.00	60.00	60.00	40.00	80.00
Mechanics	57.14	60.00	60.00	40.00	80.00
Grammar Proficiency	52.38	60.00	60.00	40.00	80.00

The table above presents the average percentage score of students' writing ability in six main aspects: content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, and grammar proficiency. From the data, it can be seen that Organization has the highest average percentage (62.86%), indicating that students are quite good at organizing ideas logically and coherently. Vocabulary is in the second position (60.00%), which reflects students' ability to choose appropriate words to express ideas. In contrast, the Grammar Proficiency aspect had the lowest score (52.38%), indicating students' greatest weakness in forming grammatically complex sentences. In addition, the grammar and mechanics aspects each had an average of 57.14%, indicating challenges in consistency of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Overall, despite some strengths in certain aspects, weaknesses in grammar and mechanics hinder the clarity and effectiveness of students' writing, thus requiring special attention in the learning process to improve their overall writing.

Table 4. Percentage Distribution by Score Range

Range (Score)	Category	Frequency	Percentage
0-240	Poor	2	9.52%
241-320	Fair	3	14.29%
321-400	Good	12	57.14%
401-480	Excellent	4	19.05%

Explanation: This table categorizes students based on their score ranges into four categories: Poor, Fair, Good, and Excellent. Here's the detailed explanation:

1. Score Range 0-240 (Poor)

Frequency: 2 students (9.52%)

Explanation: Students in this category show very low writing ability. They struggle in many aspects such as content, organization, and grammar.

2. Score Range 241-320 (Fair)

Frequency: 3 students (14.29%)

Explanation: Students in this range show moderate writing ability. While there are some strengths in their writing, many areas still need improvement, such as structure and more precise vocabulary use.

3. Score Range 321-400 (Good)

Frequency: 12 students (57.14%)

Explanation: The majority of students (57.14%) fall into this category, indicating that they have good writing skills with solid strengths in areas like content and organization. However, there is still room for improvement in other areas.

4. Score Range 401-480 (Excellent)

Frequency: 4 students (19.05%)

Explanation: Students in this category demonstrate very high writing ability. They excel in almost all aspects, including grammar and organization, but only a small number of students reached this level.

Table 5. Aspect-by-Aspect Performance Analysis

Aspect	High Performers (Score 80)	Moderate Performers (Score 60)	Low Performers (Score 40)
Content	4	13	4
Organization	7	12	2
Grammar	3	12	6
Vocabulary	4	13	4
Mechanics	7	12	2
Grammar Proficiency	3	12	6

Grammar and grammar proficiency demonstrated the highest percentage of low performers (28.57%), emphasizing the need for grammar-focused instruction. In contrast, mechanics and organization were areas of relative strength.

Explanation of the main findings as follows:

1. Content: Students who scored high in content demonstrated the ability to integrate descriptive details effectively, whereas those with lower scores struggled with relevance and richness of information.
2. Organization: High scores in organization reflected well-structured texts with clear introductions, bodies, and conclusions. Students with lower scores exhibited fragmented and poorly sequenced ideas.
3. Grammar and Grammar Proficiency: Frequent issues included inconsistent use of tenses, subject-verb agreement errors, and sentence fragments. These areas need targeted interventions.
4. Vocabulary: The use of varied and contextually appropriate vocabulary was a strength for high-scoring students, whereas lower performers relied on repetitive and basic word choices.
5. Mechanics: High scores in mechanics indicated strong control over punctuation and capitalization, while lower scores were due to frequent errors that impeded readability.

Discussion

The results of the study on the ability to write descriptive texts of students at SMP Muhammadiyah Mataram show that in general students are able to produce writing in the "Good" category, especially in terms of idea organization and mechanics (spelling and punctuation), which is consistent with the findings of Astuti et al. (2020) and research at Norhidayah et al. (2023) which emphasized that students tend to excel in organizing texts and mastering basic mechanics. This is in line with the theory of Richards & Renandya (2002) which emphasizes the importance of organizing ideas systematically in descriptive writing so that the message is conveyed clearly and coherently. In addition, Graham & Perin (2007) added

that the use of good text structure and logical idea development greatly determine the quality of descriptive writing. However, this study also revealed significant weaknesses in the aspects of grammar and vocabulary, especially in the use of tense, subject-verb agreement, and lexical variation, which is in line with the findings of Murtiantin (2024) and Rahayu (2024) which showed that grammatical errors and limited vocabulary are still the main obstacles in students' descriptive writing. This is also reinforced by the results of research at Said et al. (2024) which found that students had difficulty in constructing descriptive sentences that were effective and linguistically appropriate.

As an illustration, an example of good student writing is as follows: "My favorite place is my grandmother's kitchen. The walls are painted yellow, and the smell of cinnamon always fills the air. Every Sunday, we bake cookies together."

This writing shows a clear descriptive structure with the identification of the place at the beginning, followed by a detailed description involving the five senses (the smell of cinnamon) and routine activities that provide a personal and lively feel. The use of consistent tense (present tense), complete sentences, and varied and appropriate vocabulary such as "painted yellow" and "smell of cinnamon" show good mastery of linguistic aspects. This is in accordance with the theory of Graham & Perin (2007) which emphasizes the use of sensory language and vivid vocabulary to increase the appeal of writing, as well as the theory of Richards & Renandya (2002) which emphasizes the importance of coherence and cohesion in descriptive text.

On the other hand, an example of poor writing is:

"My favorite place is my garden. It has many flowers and I feel happy there."

This writing contains several basic grammatical errors such as subject-verb agreement errors ("are" should be "is", "have" should be "has", "feels" should be "feel"), incorrect use of plural forms ("flower" should be "flowers"), and sentences that are less varied and less lively. These errors make the message less clear and disrupt the smoothness of communication, in accordance with the theory of EGUMMP (2023) which emphasizes that grammatical errors can hinder the effectiveness of conveying ideas in writing. In addition, limited vocabulary makes writing seem monotonous and less interesting, as emphasized by Mariadass et al. (2022) who highlighted the importance of vocabulary enrichment in learning to write so that students can express ideas more richly and precisely.

Comparison with other studies also strengthens this finding. For example, a study at SMP Negeri 4 Talio, Central Kalimantan (2024) showed that students' descriptive writing skills were still in the average category with a mean score of 62.62, indicating the need to improve the quality of early writing learning. In addition, research by Fikriyyah et al. (2024) using local wisdom-based literacy media succeeded in significantly improving students' descriptive writing skills, indicating that the use of contextual and creative learning media can help overcome weaknesses in grammar and vocabulary aspects. The genre-based pedagogical approach applied at SMP Negeri 1 Gelumbang also provides an effective alternative method by emphasizing genre awareness in writing, which can improve the structure and content of students' writing.

In theory, the results of this study confirm the importance of writing learning that not only focuses on organizing ideas and mechanics, but also emphasizes mastery of grammar and enrichment of vocabulary in a contextual and integrated manner. According to Mohammadkarimi (2022) and Mariadass et al. (2022), the use of comprehensive analytical rubrics and specific feedback greatly helps students recognize errors and improve their writing gradually. A learning approach that integrates grammar exercises in the context of meaningful writing and vocabulary development through creative media and repeated practice (Fikriyyah et al., 2024) is believed to be able to improve students' descriptive writing skills comprehensively and sustainably.

Thus, this study provides added value by combining a comprehensive evaluation of five key aspects of descriptive writing—content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics—which have rarely been done simultaneously in previous studies. These findings not only confirm the results of previous research but also emphasize the urgency of developing more holistic writing learning strategies that are responsive to students' needs, especially in improving linguistic weaknesses that have been the main obstacles to the quality of their descriptive writing.

CONCLUSION

This study set out to comprehensively evaluate the descriptive writing abilities of second-grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah Mataram, employing a descriptive quantitative approach that assessed five key aspects: content, text organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The findings revealed that while a majority of students (57.14%) demonstrated “Good” proficiency in descriptive writing, a significant portion still fell into the “Fair” (14.29%) and “Poor” (9.52%) categories, highlighting a considerable variation in skill levels within the classroom. Notably, students excelled in organizing their ideas and adhering to the mechanics of writing, such as spelling and punctuation. These strengths are consistent with earlier research (Astuti et al., 2020; Norhidayah et al., 2023) and support the theoretical perspectives of Richards & Renandya (2002) and Graham & Perin (2007), who emphasize the importance of coherent structure and clear organization in effective descriptive writing.

Despite these strengths, the study also uncovered persistent and significant weaknesses in students' grammatical accuracy and vocabulary use. Many students struggled with tense consistency, subject-verb agreement, and the construction of complete sentences—issues that have been widely documented in previous research (Murtiantin, 2024; Rahayu, 2024; Said et al., 2024). For instance, while some students produced well-structured and vivid texts such as, “My favorite place is my grandmother’s kitchen. The walls are painted yellow, and the smell of cinnamon always fills the air. Every Sunday, we bake cookies together,” others submitted texts with fundamental errors, for example, “My favorite place are my garden. It have many flower and I feels happy there.” These examples not only illustrate the gap between students' ability to organize ideas and their linguistic accuracy but also underscore the urgent need for targeted grammar and vocabulary instruction.

The results of this study contribute new value to the field by offering a holistic assessment that integrates all five critical components of descriptive writing, a methodological approach that is rarely found in previous studies, which often focus on a single aspect. This comprehensive evaluation provides a more nuanced understanding of students' strengths and weaknesses, thereby offering practical insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and future researchers. The findings suggest that while students are capable of producing coherent and well-organized texts, their expressive power and communicative clarity are often undermined by grammatical and lexical shortcomings. This underscores the necessity of reinforcing grammar instruction and vocabulary enrichment within the context of meaningful writing activities, as recommended by EGUMMP (2023), Mariadass et al. (2022), and Mohammadkarimi (2022).

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of contextual and differentiated learning strategies, such as the integration of local wisdom-based media (Fikriyyah et al., 2024) and genre-based pedagogy (SMP Negeri 1 Gelumbang), which have proven effective in enhancing students' descriptive writing skills. Teachers are encouraged to adopt analytic rubrics that provide specific, actionable feedback and to facilitate process-based writing instruction that allows students to revise and improve their work iteratively. By focusing on both the structural and linguistic dimensions of writing, educators can better support students in developing the comprehensive writing skills required by the curriculum and real-world communication.

In conclusion, this study not only reaffirms the challenges faced by junior high school students in mastering descriptive writing but also offers a clear direction for instructional improvement. The holistic assessment framework and the integration of theory and empirical evidence provide a strong foundation for designing more responsive and effective teaching strategies. Future research is encouraged to explore the impact of innovative instructional interventions, longitudinally track students' progress, and expand the scope to include diverse educational contexts. Ultimately, the insights gained from this study are expected to inform the ongoing development of English language teaching in Indonesia, ensuring that students are equipped with the skills necessary to express themselves creatively, accurately, and confidently in written English.

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